

AO 91 (Rev. 11/11) Criminal Complaint

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Northern District of Texas



FEB 24 2025 PM 3:30  
FILED - USDC - NDTX - LU  
286

United States of America

v.

Tristan Rene Langston

Case No.

5 - 25 MJ 034

Defendant(s)

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of February 21, 2025 in the county of Lubbock in the  
Northern District of Texas, the defendant(s) violated:

Code Section

Offense Description

18 U.S.C. § 875(c)

Transmitting Threats in Interstate Commerce

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

See attached affidavit.

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.

Complainant's signature

Roy Owen, Special Agent, U.S. Secret Service

Printed name and title

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.

Date: 02/24/2025

Judge's signature

City and state: Lubbock, Texas

Amanda "Amy" R. Burch

Printed name and title

## **AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF COMPLAINT**

### **Affiant's Background and Experience**

I, Roy Owen, affiant, being duly sworn, state that I am a special agent with the United States Secret Service ("Secret Service"). I have been a special agent since 2007 and have received training in a variety of investigative and legal matters, including probable cause. I investigate criminal violations of Title 18, United States Code, Section 875(c), Transmitting Threats in Interstate Commerce, and other crimes. I am fully familiar with the facts of this case.

The information contained in this affidavit is based upon my personal experience and information relayed to me by other law enforcement officers involved in this investigation. Because this affidavit is submitted for the limited purpose of establishing probable cause to believe a crime has been committed and that the defendant committed it, I have not included every fact known to me in this affidavit.

### **Title 18, United States Code, Section 875(c)**

Title 18, United States Code, Section 875(c), makes it a crime for anyone to send or transmit a threat to injure the person of another in interstate or foreign commerce. There are three elements of this offense:

*First:* That the defendant knowingly sent or transmitted a communication containing a threat to injure the person of another, as charged;

*Second:* the defendant transmitted the communication either with the purpose of issuing a true threat or with knowledge that the communication would be understood as a true threat, as defined in these instructions; and

*Third:* That the communication was sent in interstate or foreign commerce.

A “threat” is a serious statement expressing an intent to injure any person, which under the circumstances would cause apprehension in a reasonable person, as distinguished from mere idle or careless talk, exaggeration, or something said in a joking manner.

The United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit has held that this crime does not require that the threat be made directly to the victim. *See United States v. Morales*, 272 F.3d 284, 288 (5th Cir. 2001). Postings on the Internet are sent in interstate or foreign commerce because transmitting messages by means of the Internet is tantamount to moving messages across state lines and thus constitutes transportation in interstate commerce. *Cf. United States v. Runyan*, 290 F.3d 223, 239 (5th Cir. 2002) (holding that use of Internet, in and of itself, constitutes interstate transportation sufficient to satisfy the interstate commerce element of 18 U.S.C. § 2251); *see United States v. Elonis*, 897 F. Supp.2d 335, 343-44 (E.D. Pa. 2012), *overruled on other grounds by Elonis v. United States*, 575 U.S. 723 (2015) (holding same in the context of 18 U.S.C. § 875(c)).

#### **Facts Establishing Probable Cause**

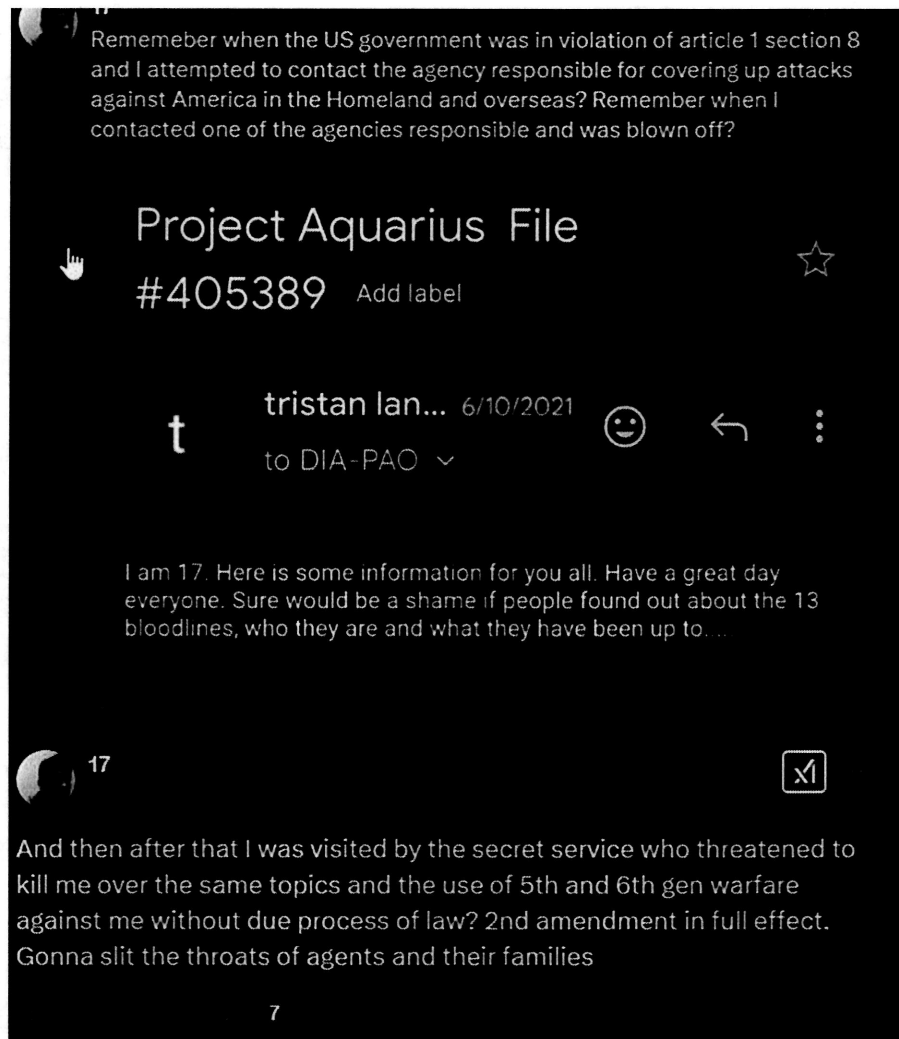
I and another Secret Service agent encountered Tristan Rene Langston, a Lubbock resident, in or about June 2023 after he posted threats against then-President Barack Obama. We interviewed Tristan Rene Langston and others and determined that the threats were idle threats that did not require action. Since that time, Tristan Rene Langston has sent emails to Secret Service agents advising the

agency of various purported crimes using language that I know through my training and experience to constitute conspiracy theories. In his emails, he has claimed that Secret Service should, but is not, addressing the crimes. Tristan Rene Langston has also posted these conspiracy theories on social media platforms, including X.com.

X.com is a domain for the social media platform previously known as Twitter. On or about June 10, 2021, as shown in the screenshot below, Tristan Rene Langston posted on the platform, identifying himself as “17.”

In another post shown below, Tristan Rene Langston, under his username “17,” referenced his communications with Secret Service, stating that he “attempted to contact the agency responsible for covering up attacks against America in the Homeland and overseas . . .” and “was blown off.”

On or about February 21, 2025, as shown in the third post below, Tristan Rene Langston, under his username 17, referenced his encounter with Secret Service in June 2023 and claimed that Secret Service agents threatened to kill him. He then issued a true threat, stating that he was going to “slit the throats of agents and their families.”



In reviewing the post and based on Tristan Rene Langston's previous posts on x.com and his emails to Secret Service agents, I believe that he transitioned from complaints about the Secret Service to a true threat that he intends to physically harm Secret Service agents and their families. This belief is reinforced by his reference to warfare and the Second Amendment

From my review of the post made on February 21, 2025, I have probable cause to believe that Tristan Rene Langston made the post either with the purpose



of issuing a true threat or with knowledge that the posts would be understood as a true threat.

Because Langston's post on x.com was made through the Internet, it was sent in interstate or foreign commerce because transmitting messages by means of the Internet is tantamount to moving messages across state lines and thus constitutes transportation in interstate commerce.

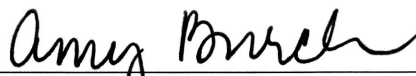
Based on my training, education, and experience, and the information provided to me, I believe that Tristan Rene Langston violated Title 18, United State Code, Section 875(c), by transmitting a threat to injure the person of another in interstate and foreign commerce.



Special Agent Roy Owen  
United States Secret Service

Pursuant to Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure 4.1 and 41(d)(3), the undersigned judicial officer has on this date considered the information communicated by reliable electronic means in considering whether a complaint, warrant, or summons will issue. In doing so, I have placed the affiant under oath, and the affiant has confirmed that the signatures on the complaint, warrant, or summons and affidavit are those of the affiant, that the document received by me is a correct and complete copy of the document submitted by the affiant, and that the information contained in the complaint, warrant, or summons and affidavit is true and correct to the best of the affiant's knowledge.

Attested to by the applicant in accordance with the requirements of Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1 by telephone on February 24, 2025.



AMANDA AMY' R. BURCH  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE